

Maine Safe Ways to School 2001-2003

Project Fact Sheet

Policy Issues:

Transportation, Public Health,
Educational Facilities, Safety, Children

Constituents:

State and Municipal Leaders and
Planners, Educational Administrators,
Parents

Summary:

During 2001-2003, the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) coordinated a federally funded, collaborative, research project to determine existing rates of bicycling and walking to school in the state. This project, entitled **Maine Safe Ways to School**, was undertaken with the expectation that the information learned through this pilot project would be useful in developing state and local policies and practices which would promote bicycling and walking to schools statewide.

Current national and state trends of increased obesity and decreased physical activity are inversely related to declining rates of bicycling and walking. The study observed a sample of 5% of overall student population walking or biking to school during fair weather. From a transportation and public health policy perspective, MaineDOT and partner agencies share a common concern in identifying the infrastructure, policy, and programmatic causes of these conditions, and a common goal of providing guidance and direction in reversing these trends.

Four representative school districts, comprising over 5,500 students from elementary through High School, were selected for the study. A baseline survey of mode of access to school and attitudes about biking and walking was followed by analysis conducted by the University of Maine Center for Research and Evaluation. Additional phases of the study included consultant analysis, community and

school leader meetings and school specific implementation measures.

A Final Report was issued in Spring 2003 which includes a full summary of the project process, findings, recommendations and implementation measures, including both physical infrastructure improvements, promotional events and policy, and practice changes at the local and state agency and administrative level.

Key Report Findings and Use:

- school site location selection considerations
- school area transportation infrastructure, state agency coordination, traffic calming strategies and public safety
- grade-specific strategies and issues
- demonstrated promotional activities to raise awareness and build community support

Presentation materials are available including issue summaries, statewide and district statistics and implementation ideas for local schools.

Project Website:

www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/bike

Directing Authority and Contact:

The Study was directed by an Advisory Committee representing state agencies, advocacy groups, and health and safety experts. The State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator served as Project Manager directing the consulting firm of Alta Planning + Design and Rizzo Associates.

Project Contact:

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